

Contacts

If you are unable to keep any appointments, or have any questions concerning your appointment, please telephone the Wellington Blood & Cancer Centre as soon as possible.

Radiation Treatment Department
Level 2
Wellington Blood & Cancer Centre
Wellington Regional Hospital
Private Bag 7902
Riddiford Street
Newtown

Telephone: 04 806 2000

Monday - Friday: 8am – 4:30pm

Brachytherapy Suite: 04 806 2024

5 North Ward oncology nurses are available for **urgent after hours advice** related to your treatment. This is after 4:30pm and on weekends. **Please call: 04 806 0418**

Information for Patients Receiving Surface Mould Brachytherapy

Radiation Treatment Department

Wellington Blood and Cancer Centre

Introduction

Your doctor has recommended a course of brachytherapy. This booklet will give you information about:

- What is brachytherapy?
- Who will I meet?
- What will my brachytherapy treatment involve?
- Possible side effects
- Parking, accommodation and transport to the hospital
- What will happen after treatment?

Treatment is delivered at the Radiation Treatment Department at the Wellington Blood and Cancer Centre on level 2 of Wellington Hospital. Please report to reception and a radiation therapist will escort you to the brachytherapy treatment room.

What will Happen After Treatment?

Reactions usually peak about 1-2 weeks after treatment. Most people find these start to resolve 3-6 weeks after treatment. A follow-up appointment with the doctor will be given to you.

Support Services

Please ask a member of your treatment team if you would like more information or to access any of these services.

- Cancer Society
- Counselling (general / relationship / sexual issues)
- Social work
- Support groups
- Massage
- Fit for Life
- Chaplains

Parking

- **Hospital grounds** – You will be charged an hourly rate, access to the department is via the GREEN lift to level 2.
- **Cancer Society, Riddiford St** – offer free parking. Please report to the Cancer Society reception to obtain a parking permit.

Transport

- **Public** – Buses run regularly to Wellington Hospital. For timetable information ring Metlink on 0800 801 700 or see the stand in the hospital atrium.
- **Shuttle service for patients living in Porirua/Kapiti** – A free shuttle runs between Kenepuru and Wellington Hospitals. It operates on the hour from 7am to 6pm weekdays. You must book in advance by phoning: (04) 385 5999.
- **Volunteer Drivers** – The Cancer Society has limited volunteer transport available to people who are **unable** to make their own transport arrangements. Please contact the reception staff on 806 2000 for any enquiries.

Accommodation

People who are traveling further than 100km each way may be entitled to accommodation at Margaret Stewart House or a local motel. Please ask the reception staff for more information.

What is Brachytherapy?

Brachytherapy is the use of specialised radiation to treat cancer. For this treatment, radiation is delivered close to or on the tumour site. A special applicator, called a surface mould is positioned on the skin for treatment and a radioactive source travels through this applicator to deliver the treatment.

The advantage of surface mould brachytherapy is that the treatment can be customised and the radiation can be delivered directly to the skin surface. This means that less radiation will go to the skin underneath the treatment area.

Treatment plans are designed to suit your individual needs. Your doctor will tell you how many treatments you require and how often you will have these treatments.

Brachytherapy may be given alone or in combination with external beam radiation therapy.

Who will I meet?

Radiation Oncologist: A Radiation Oncologist is a doctor who has specialised in looking after patients with cancer, in particular, involving the use of radiation therapy. Your Radiation Oncologist decides whether brachytherapy is required, how it should be delivered as well as the number of treatments needed.

Radiation Oncology Registrar: A Radiation Oncology Registrar is a doctor who is currently training to become a specialist. The Registrar works closely with your Radiation Oncologist

Radiation Therapist: Radiation therapists are involved at each stage of your treatment. They organise your appointments and will meet you before your planning session to explain the process. The radiation therapists also plan and deliver your radiation treatment.

Medical Physicist: Medical Physicists are involved in maintaining the brachytherapy machines and work with the doctors and radiation therapists to achieve the best treatment plan for you.

Nurse: Radiation nurses will see you during your pre-assessment and pre-treatment appointments. They will also be involved in your care the day of your brachytherapy procedure/s.

Tiredness

Some people experience tiredness towards the end of their treatment. This can be caused by a number of factors – travelling to and from treatment, change in routine, other treatment you've had recently and the brachytherapy treatment itself. You may require a nap in the afternoon or to take time off work. Please let your treatment team know if you are tired or are having trouble sleeping. If your sleeplessness is caused by anxiety then the Cancer Society may be able to help with counselling.

Contraception During and After Brachytherapy

If you are a woman of childbearing age, it is important that you do not become pregnant during your treatment. This is because radiation treatment given during pregnancy can harm a developing baby. Before starting treatment you will need to confirm that you aren't pregnant and that you understand you should avoid becoming pregnant during treatment (this means you will need to use a reliable form of birth control if you are sexually active). You can ask your doctors for information about this.

If you are a male having brachytherapy to the skin on your pelvis, your doctor may advise you not to father a child during treatment and for up to six months after it is finished. You can ask your doctors for information about this.

General Advice

Do

- You may wish to use a simple moisturiser *such as* Health E Fatty Cream, Aveno or calendula cream on the treated area. Avoid using cosmetics, perfumes, highly fragranced lotions etc on the treated area.
- Carry on using the soap or shower gel that you usually do. You can continue using deodorant unless a member of the treatment team has told you not to.
- Personal hygiene is important so please bathe or shower regularly. Use a soft towel and pat the skin dry rather than rubbing it.

Do Not

- Do not expose the treated area to direct sunlight and strong winds. If this is unavoidable please cover the area being treated as much as possible. Do not use sunscreen on the treatment area until the skin reaction has completely healed.

Smoking

If you smoke, we strongly advise you to stop smoking as this can worsen the side effects of treatment. You may find this very difficult. Please speak to your treatment team about support available to help with this.

What will my brachytherapy treatment involve?

Planning

Before your first treatment, you will attend a planning session which can take up to 2 hours. At this appointment a surface mould applicator will be made for the specific area we are treating. A CT scan will then be taken with the applicator positioned on your skin. For some sites an existing mould can be customised. If a mould needs to be made from scratch, this will be done at the first appointment and a second planning appointment will be needed for the CT scan. In order to reproduce the position of the mould, we may ask to give you a permanent ink dot on your skin. We will discuss this with you in detail if it is necessary. After your CT scan a treatment plan will be designed for your specific needs.

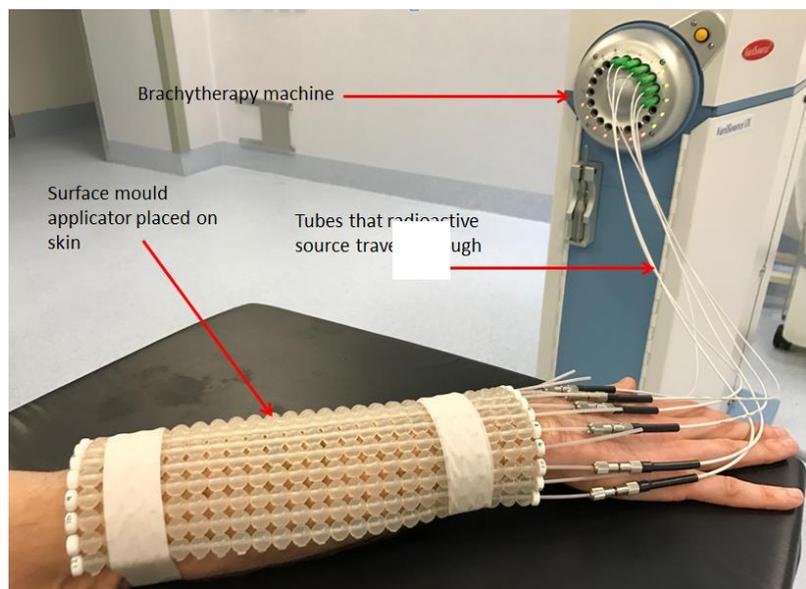
Treatment

Treatment is given in the Radiation Treatment Department. You will be seated or lying down next to the brachytherapy machine for treatment.

The surface mould applicator will be placed over the treatment site and connected to the brachytherapy machine through a number of thin tubes. The treatment team will leave the room while the treatment is being delivered but they will be watching you on CCTV cameras at all times.

The radioactive source then travels down the tubes into the surface mould applicator. You will not feel any sensation from the radiation while the treatment is being delivered.

The treatment time will vary depending on the site being treated. This can be from 10 minutes to up to an hour for each treatment.



After the treatment is completed, the applicator will be removed and you will be able to leave the department immediately. You will **not** be radioactive after the treatment and you will be able to have contact with people as normal.

Possible Side Effects

Treatment is generally well tolerated. Please inform your treatment team if you notice any of the following:

Skin Reactions

- **Skin becoming pink or red or dry and flaky** – carry on with general skincare advice.
- **Skin feeling warm** – use a cold compress.
- **Skin feeling itchy** – avoid scratching or rubbing the treatment area as this may increase the reaction or cause the skin to break.
- **Skin becoming sore and sensitive** – if you experience pain due to your skin reaction mention this to your Radiation Therapist.
- **Skin blistering, breaking, peeling or weeping** – if the skin breaks **DO NOT USE CREAM OF ANY DESCRIPTION ON THE TREATED SKIN**. These may cause complications with infection. Your Radiation Therapist will be able to advise you on how to care for that area of skin.